

Tobacco Center of Regulatory Science on Youth and Young Adults

Informing and Correcting Perceptions Regarding Tobacco Products among Young Adults

(Project 3)

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P50 CA-180906-01

Abstract:

The tobacco industry has a vested interest in those aged 18-25 years since they are most likely to use tobacco, are responsive to marketing, and, once addicted, become a life-long consumer. Importantly, half of these long-term consumers die prematurely from their tobacco use. With the decrease in the use of some conventional tobacco products (i.e. cigarettes), the use of others (e.g., smokeless tobacco [dip and chew] and cigars) has increased. These products include alternative, new and emerging products (e.g., snus, dissolvables, hookahs, etc.). Despite evidence to the contrary for some of these products, like cigars and hookah, new tobacco products are often perceived as less harmful to conventional tobacco products. There is a critical need to inform FDA tobacco regulation decisions about their communications of risk and harmful constituents. The ownership of mobile cellular phones with capacity for receipt of text messages is almost ubiquitous. This innovative mobile-phone text messaging project has two goals: 1) to assess awareness, attitudes, receptivity, and comprehension of harmful effects of conventional and new and emerging tobacco products among young adults; and 2) to examine and compare the efficacy of different types of text messages, with different types of tobacco products, to convey information to young adults regarding risks associated with tobacco product use. For this study, we utilize an experimental repeated measures design with five measurement intervals. We will recruit an ethnically diverse sample of students attending community colleges (n=640). Those recruited will be randomized to one of eight types of text messages. Each type of message will represent a combination of message characteristics guided by health communication theories. We will assess comprehension of risks, awareness, attitudes, and receptivity in each group pre- and -post receipt of text messages over a 30-day message campaign period and at 3-month follow-up. Following development of the message library we will enroll manageable samples over years 2-4. The Specific Aims are as follows:

Aim 1. To assess the awareness, attitudes, receptivity, and comprehension of the harmful effects of conventional and new and emerging tobacco products. Aim 2. To identify the most effective combinations of text message framing for communicating information about the potential harmful effects of tobacco products. Aim 3. To derive key moderators of awareness, attitudes, receptivity, and understanding of the harmful risks and constituents of conventional, new and emerging tobacco products.